



0. UNANIMOUS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - Story  
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**20. UNANIMOUS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

Charles Peale Polk (1767-1822) created this portrait of George Washington, at Princeton, circa 1790. Washington was selected as America's President. We learn, from the National Archives, that he won both of his presidential elections (in 1789 and 1792) virtually unanimously: "For all intents and purposes, Washington was unopposed for election as President. Under the system then in place, votes for Vice President were not differentiated from votes for President."

George Washington was as reluctant to accept the job of President as he was reluctant to become Commander-in-Chief. He had kept his vow to resign at the end of the war and meant to keep his vow never to seek political office.

But when the country he had fought so hard to create was virtually falling apart - because Articles of Confederation uniting the States were weak - Washington relented.

He took office in New York City on April 30, 1789 - the only unanimously elected President in the history of the country. (Technically, he wasn't the first. That little-known honor belongs to Samuel Huntington who was President of the Continental Congress when the country first took the name "United States.")

The original of Washington's Inaugural Address, which he also signed, is preserved at the US National Archives. His copy of the Constitution includes an important handwritten addition (to "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States") which he made to the oath of office. (That phrase had been proposed by James Madison and George Mason.)

Repeating the oath when he was sworn in, Washington added something else at the end:

*So help me God.*

Every president thereafter has followed his lead.

Many "firsts" happened while Washington was head of the military and then head of the country. From rebellious colonials who refused to tolerate English Bishops in their new land to idealistic politicians who risked

their lives by severing ties to the Crown, America was the place where people risked much for what they believed.

During the year Washington took command of the Army (1775), another branch of the military - the Marines - was first formed at the old Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, the largest city in the colonies. Proposing the first seal of the new country, Thomas Jefferson did not prevail, although we can still view his designs today.

While historians may never resolve whether Betsy Ross actually created the new country's flag, two original Revolutionary War flags still survive. Follow this link to the tattered flag carried at the Battle of Stoney Point.

As Commander-in-Chief, General Washington experienced the highs and lows of all his men. From the surrender of Burgoyne and the Redcoats at Saratoga to the fall of Charleston, Washington's strategy and fortitude kept the troops on track. (This link takes you to his copy of General Benjamin Lincoln's letter to Sir Henry Clinton expressing willingness to surrender Charleston - the lowest point of the war.)

The Revolutionary War is a story of how the will to be free can triumph against impossible odds. Many patriots were responsible for transforming America from British-owned colonies into "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Many of the "firsts" which occurred within a short time frame are still part of American life today.

The colonists were not always unanimous, but most agreed on one fundamental objective: Striving to be free was worth the highest price they could pay. And many were called upon to pay it.

**NOTE:** AwesomeStories gratefully acknowledges Edward J. Krasnoborski who created the wonderful U.S. Military Academy annotated maps linked throughout this story. Mr. Krasnoborski's career, as a cartographer at the Academy, spanned sixty years.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/UNANIMOUS-PRESIDENTIAL-ELECTION-American-Revolution-Highlights>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/UNANIMOUS-PRESIDENTIAL-ELECTION-American-Revolution-Highlights>

## Media Stream



### Election Results - George Washington, President

From *Harper's Encyclopaedia of United States History from 458 A.D. to 1905*.

Courtesy, New York Public Library Digital Collection, image 808898.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Election-Results-George-Washington-President>

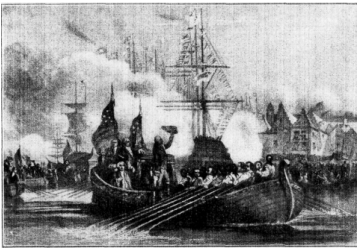


### A New President - Washington to New York

Courtesy New York Public Library, Digital Gallery, image 815006.

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### Reception of President Washington at New York

Image online, courtesy Gutenberg.org website.

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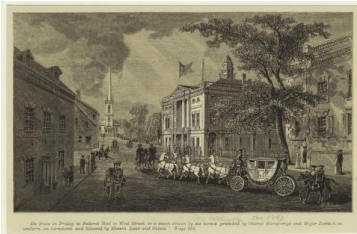


### Washington - Oath of Office

Illustration originally published in *Century* magazine - April, 1889.

Courtesy, New York Public Library Digital Collection, image 808898.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Washington-Oath-of-Office>



### Inaugural - First for George Washington

Courtesy, New York Public Library Digital Collection, image 800070.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Inaugural-First-for-George-Washington>



### First Presidential Mansion - No. 1 Cherry Street

Illustration of First Presidential Mansion - No. 1 Cherry Street, New York - from *The Kirk on Rutgers Farm*, by Frederick Brückbauer, page 20. Online, courtesy Google Books.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/First-Presidential-Mansion-No.-1-Cherry-Street>



### George Washington - Taking Control at Cambridge

Illustration by Charles Stanley Reinhart; originally published in *Harper's Weekly*.

Courtesy, New York Public Library Digital Gallery, image 808520.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-Washington-Taking-Control-at-Cambridge>



### Old Tun Tavern

U.S. National Archives image 127-EX-1-20.

Linked above: Map of Philadelphia's waterfront, including Penn's Landing, courtesy University of Pennsylvania.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Old-Tun-Tavern>

a heraldic phrase. The first gold, and an en-  
 embled rose, red and white, for England; the  
 second white, with a thistle, in its proper colors,  
 for Scotland; the third green, with a harp of  
 the whole, Sixty, or the United States or  
 America, MDCCLXXVI. For the reverse, he  
 proposed the following device: Pharoah, sitting  
 in an open chariot, a crown on his head and a



did not think it of sufficient importance to put  
 it on record; and nothing more was done. It be-  
 lieve, until the spring of 1779. Jefferson, you  
 know, soon went to Virginia; Franklin was

## Proposed Great Seal of the United States

Courtesy, U.S. Library of Congress.

Also linked above: Images, quote and information from *Establishing a Federal Republic*,  
 Library of Congress.

A note regarding the text, imaged above: In designing the proposed great seal, the  
 committee selected symbols to signify "the Countries from which these States have been  
 peopled." They chose a rose (England), a thistle (Scotland), a harp (Ireland), a fleur-de-lis  
 (France), a lion (Holland) and a two-headed eagle (Germany).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Proposed-Great-Seal-of-the-United-States>



## Battle of Saratoga

Image, Library of Congress.

Information, and quotes, from the National Park Services' web site on the Saratoga  
 Battlefield.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Battle-of-Saratoga>



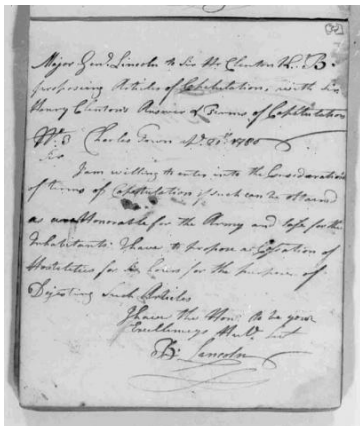
## Fall of Charleston - 12 May 1780

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

Linked in the above description: *Attack on Savannah, Oct. 8, 1779*. Illustration by A.I. Keller.  
 U.S. National Archives, image148-GW-1120.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/-Fall-of-Charleston-12-May-1780>

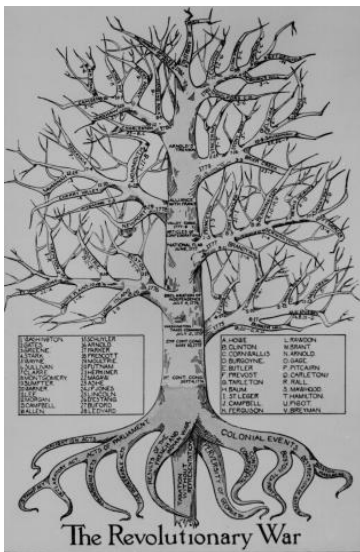


## Letter of Surrender, Charleston

Facsimile of original letter, courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Letter-of-Surrender-Charleston>



## Patriots of the Revolutionary War

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives, image 148-GW-378.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Patriots-of-the-Revolutionary-War>



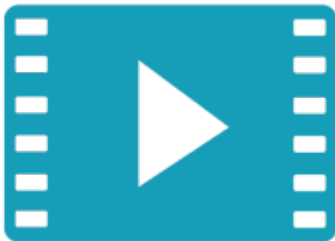
## UNANIMOUS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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## George Washington - Early Years

Clip from "Greatest Heroes in History - Washington," Episode 6 of a BBC series which originally aired in 2002. Online, courtesy [BFI National Library](#).



### **Executive Producer:**

Alan Clements

### **Director:**

Jane Quigley

### **Series Producer:**

Melanie Jappy

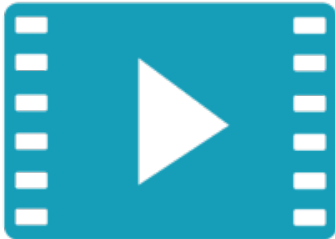
### **A Wark Clements Production**

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## George Washington - Revolutionary War General

Clip from "Greatest Heroes in History - Washington," Episode 6 of a BBC series which originally aired in 2002. Online, courtesy [BFI National Library](#).



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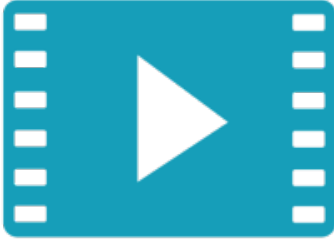
### **A Wark Clements Production**

View this asset at:

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## George Washington - Later Years

Clip from "Greatest Heroes in History - Washington," Episode 6 of a BBC series which originally aired in 2002. Online, courtesy [BFI National Library](#). Copyright, BBC, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the series.



**Executive Producer:**

Alan Clements

**Director:**

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**Series Producer:**

Melanie Jappy

**A Wark Clements Production**

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-Washington-Later-Years>